How to Talk About ANTICIPATORY GRIEF with Your Child

Anticipatory grief is the sadness we experience when we expect a loss. This might happen when someone is seriously ill or when a big life change is coming. Talking about it can be difficult, especially with a child or teen. Having gentle, age-appropriate conversations can help your child put their feelings into words, feel less alone, and understand that grief can begin well before the actual loss.

Acknowledge their feelings. Let your child know that feeling sad, worried, or confused is normal. Create space for their questions and emotions without judgment and check in regularly so they feel supported and understand they're not facing this alone.

Be a calm guide. Children take their cues from the adults around them. When they see you gently naming and managing your own feelings, it helps them feel safe—and shows them that it's okay to express their emotions, too.

Make meaningful moments. If you're anticipating the loss of a loved one—like a parent, grandparent, or close family member—look for simple, meaningful ways to spend time with them. Draw pictures, share favorite memories, or sit together in silence. Even small moments of connection can bring comfort to both of you.

Talk about your feelings. Help your child understand changes in the household or your behavior. If you're feeling quieter, more tired, or emotional, explaining this can ease their worries and encourage them to share their feelings.

Expect ups and downs. Grief can come in waves. Some days will feel harder than others, and that's okay. Let your child know that there's no "right" way to feel.

Reassure them they'll get through it. While this time may feel heavy, children can learn that they are strong enough to face hard things—and that they don't have to do it alone.

Don't hesitate to reach out to a professional if your child exhibits persistent regressive behaviors, nightmares, refusal to go to school or activities. You know your child best. If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to JCS at **410-466-9200**.

For more information on grief support, contact

Donna Kane
Grief Clinician
Jewish COMMUNITY SERVICES
at **dkane@jcsbaltimore.org** or **410-843-7394**.

To learn more about grief support and resources or to access video programs for children, visit **jcsbalt.org/grief**.

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